



**Seer stone associated with Joseph Smith, long side view** Photograph by Welden C. Andersen and Richard E. Turley Jr. (Church History Library, Salt Lake City.)



## Seer stone

### Summary

A special stone used for seeing visions and aiding translation.<sup>1</sup> According to a European tradition of folk belief reaching back at least into the middle ages, quartz crystals or other stones could be used to find missing objects or to see other things not visible to the natural eye.<sup>2</sup> This practice accompanied European immigrants to North America and was part of JS's cultural environment in western New York in the 1820s, though by then the practice was waning.<sup>3</sup> In his youth, JS occasionally used seer stones to help neighbors find missing objects or search for buried treasure.<sup>4</sup> By 1826, JS had at least two seer stones, and according to Brigham Young he eventually had five seer stones.<sup>5</sup> According to JS, in 1823 an angelic messenger revealed to him the location of gold plates and an instrument with which to translate them.<sup>6</sup> This instrument consisted of "two stones in silver bows" that had been used by "seers in ancient times."<sup>7</sup> The Book of Mormon itself referred to "interpreters" that were to be

kept with the plates.<sup>8</sup> JS explained that he used the pair of stones found with the plates in his translation of the Book of Mormon.<sup>9</sup> Eyewitnesses reported that he also translated using a dark brown seer stone placed in a hat to exclude exterior light and that he used a seer stone for many of his early revelations.<sup>10</sup> JS referred to the pair of stones found with the plates as “spectacles,” and he later referred to these stones and his other seer stones with the term “Urim and Thummim,” the name of the instrument used by the high priest of Israel in the Bible.<sup>11</sup> In 1830, JS apparently began dictating most of his revelations without the aid of a seer stone.<sup>12</sup> See also “Urim and Thummim.”

Note on Seer Stone Images

## Links

**Papers**

**Glossary**

Discourse, 29 July 1838

Letter to John S. Carter, 13 April 1833

Questions and Answers, 8 May 1838

Travel Account and Questions, November 1837

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